

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Presented by

Mr. Luther Byrd, Jr.
US Air Force Retired
Superintendent Medical
Outpatient Clinics

History of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month

The effort to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment actually began in 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” President Harry S. Truman founded the President’s Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped in 1947 to assist physically disabled veterans in finding employment.



Harry S. Truman

In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities.

In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.



General Rules

When talking with a person with a disability or discussing the concepts of disability with others, it is important to consider the impact the words you choose may have. There are many different terms and phrases that can be used to describe a person with a disability. Some are acceptable, and some negatively promote stereotypes.



As a general rule, you will never offend or confuse by using “**person-first**” language. This means putting a person’s name before their disability. For example:



- A client who is blind requests an accommodation.
- Ms. Jones, who uses a wheelchair, came into the meeting.
- Mr. Smith has multiple sclerosis.



Also, when speaking of this population segment, it is better to say “people with disabilities” than “disabled people,” or, worse yet, “the disabled.”

Disability vs. Handicap

Disability

A disability is a condition caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function. Some people have one or more disabilities.

Handicap

A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines the handicap as "to put at a disadvantage."

People with disabilities prefer to be called just that: people with disabilities. They are not conditions or diseases.

**For example,
an individual is not “an epileptic,” but rather “a person with epilepsy.”**

Inappropriate Terms

The following pages show appropriate and inappropriate terms to use when referring to persons with disabilities:



Afflicted with—Afflicted by
Stricken with—Suffers from
Victim of

These terms come with the assumption that a person with a disability is suffering or living a reduced quality of life. Do not say “**afflicted by MS**,” “**suffers a hearing loss**” or “**is a cerebral palsy victim**.”

Instead, use neutral language when describing a person who *has* a disability.
For example, “He has muscular dystrophy.”

Inappropriate Terms

Able-bodied

Refers to a person who does not have a disability. It implies people with disabilities do not have “able” bodies. It comes from a “physical ability” perspective, excluding the majority of people with disabilities.

Instead, use “non-disabled,” “does not have a disability,” or “person without a disability.”

Disabled Handicap Handicapped

The terms “disabled person” should not be used.

Instead, use the phrase “person with a disability.”



Inappropriate Terms

**Birth Defect
Defect—Defective
Deformed**

Avoid the terms above when describing a disability because it indicates that the person is somehow incomplete or sub-par.

Instead, use terms that simply state the facts of the nature of the disability such as “congenital disability,” “born with a disability,” or “has a disability.”

She was born with a disability.



Inappropriate Terms

Wheelchair-bound Confined to a Wheelchair

Do not use these terms or other phrases such as “restricted to a wheelchair” or “vertically challenged.”

Instead, use “person who uses a wheelchair” or “wheelchair-user.”



Overcome Disability Courageous

Do not use the terms “overcome his/her disability” to describe a person who is successful and productive in society. In the same way, do not say a person with a disability is “courageous” just because they have a disability and are successful and productive in society.

Inappropriate Terms

Special Special Needs

Avoid these terms when describing a person with a disability or the programs designed to serve them (with the exception of government references or formal names of organizations and programs).

It is more accurate to use the term “specific,” “specific accommodation” or “disability” depending on the context.

Mute

This is a derogatory term referring to a person who physically cannot speak. It also implies that people who do not use speech are unable to express themselves, which is not true.

Instead, use “person with a disability” or “person with a speech impairment.”



DISABILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Disability Data from 2000 Census

Before discussing employment and people with disabilities, it is important to gather some information on people with disabilities in the United States. The U.S. Census is one survey that provides data on disability. In the 2000 Census, **49.7 million** people said they had some type of long-lasting condition or disability.



Disability status was determined by two questions on the 2000 Census form: Item 16 and Item 17.

Item 16 asked each person about the existence of the following long-lasting conditions:

- a. Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment (**sensory disability**)
- b. A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying (**physical disability**)

Disability Data from 2000 Census

The 2000 Census gathered data from those five years and older.



Item 17 of the 2000 Census asked whether each individual had a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more that made it difficult to perform certain activities. The four activity categories were

- a. Learning, remembering, or concentrating (**mental disability**)
- b. Dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home (**self-care disability**)
- c. Going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office (**going outside the home disability**)
- d. Working at a job or business (**employment disability**).

Factors That Affect Job Opportunities

There are many factors that affect whether or not a person can obtain and keep a job. Many affect people with disabilities and people without disabilities. Some of these factors include availability of jobs, transportation to and from work, education level necessary to obtain a job, whether or not a person is discriminated against by an employer, and adequate child care for those with families.

The National Organization on Disability surveyed how some of these factors affect people with disabilities. This presentation will focus on the following factors surveyed by N.O.D.:

- Employment Statistics**
- Transportation**
- Education**
- Assistive Technology**
- Employment Discrimination**



National Organization on Disability Survey

The National Organization on Disability, in cooperation with the Harris Poll, provides timely survey research data on the participation of people with disabilities in American life. The 2004 survey sampled 2255 respondents ages 18 and over. 1038 were people with disabilities and 988 were people without disabilities.

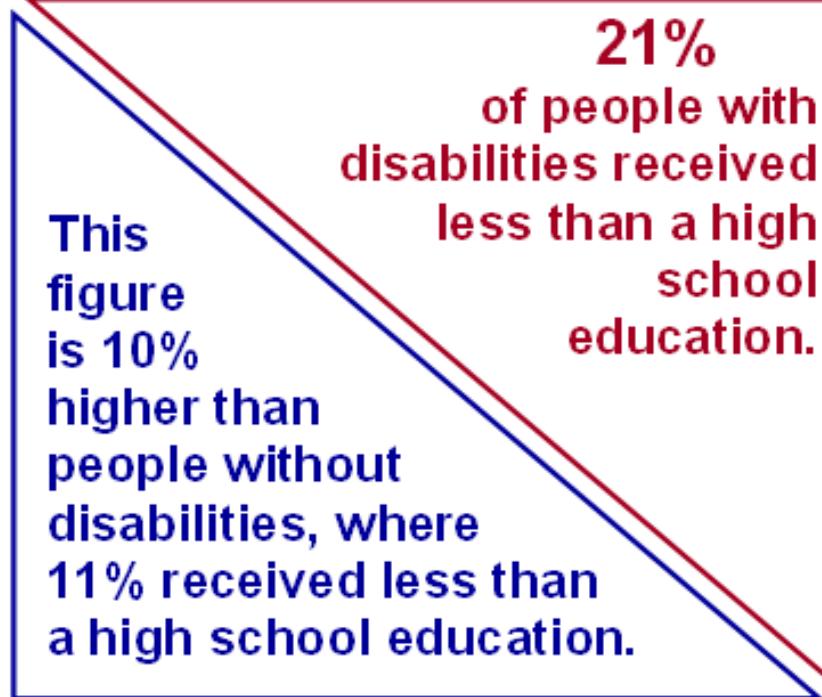
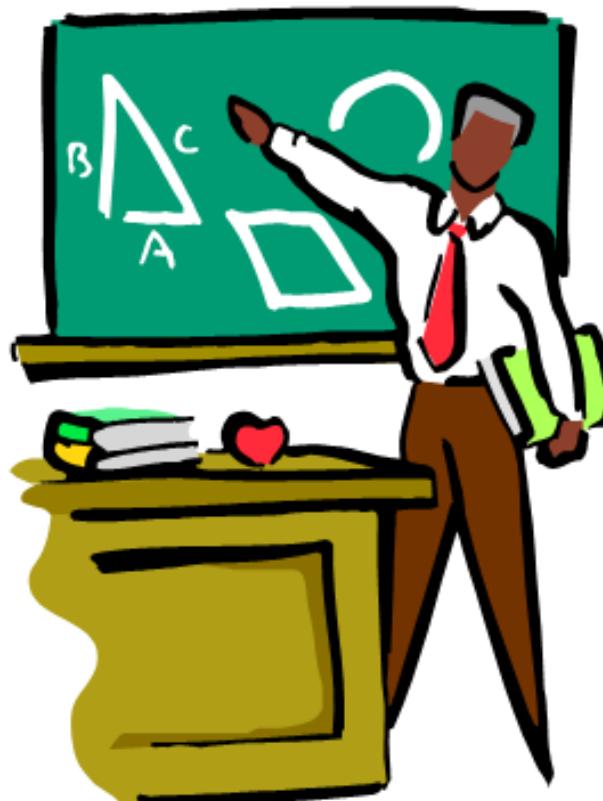
The survey gathered information on 10 key areas of life:



- Employment**
- Income**
- Education**
- Health Care**
- Access to Transportation**
- Eating Out**
- Socializing**
- Political Participation**
- Attendance at Religious Services**
- Life Satisfaction**

Education

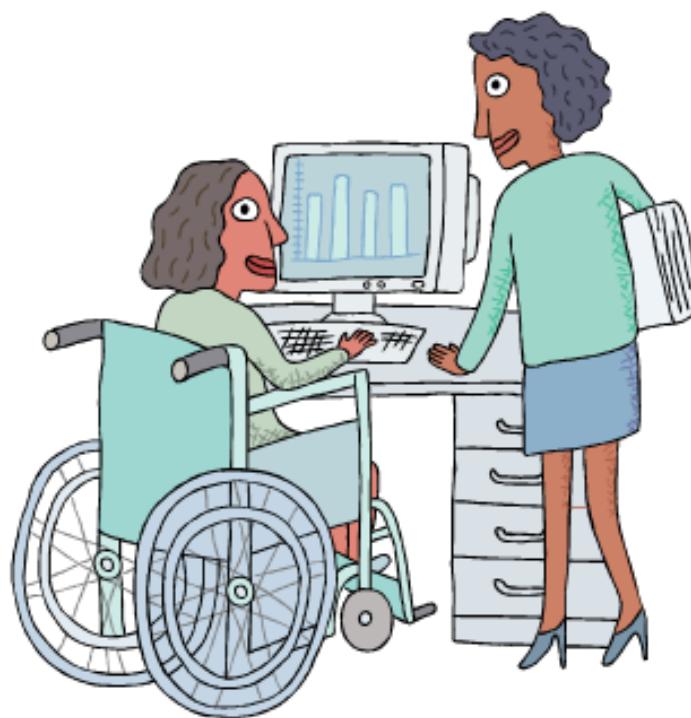
Education level greatly affects what types of jobs a person is qualified for and career advancement. The NOD-Harris Survey gathered information on whether or not an individual earned a high school education.



Assistive Technology

Some people with disabilities need the help of assistive technology at work and home. Assistive or adaptive technology can enable people with disabilities to accomplish daily tasks and assist them in communication, education, and work.

Some examples of assistive technology that are routinely used in employment settings are



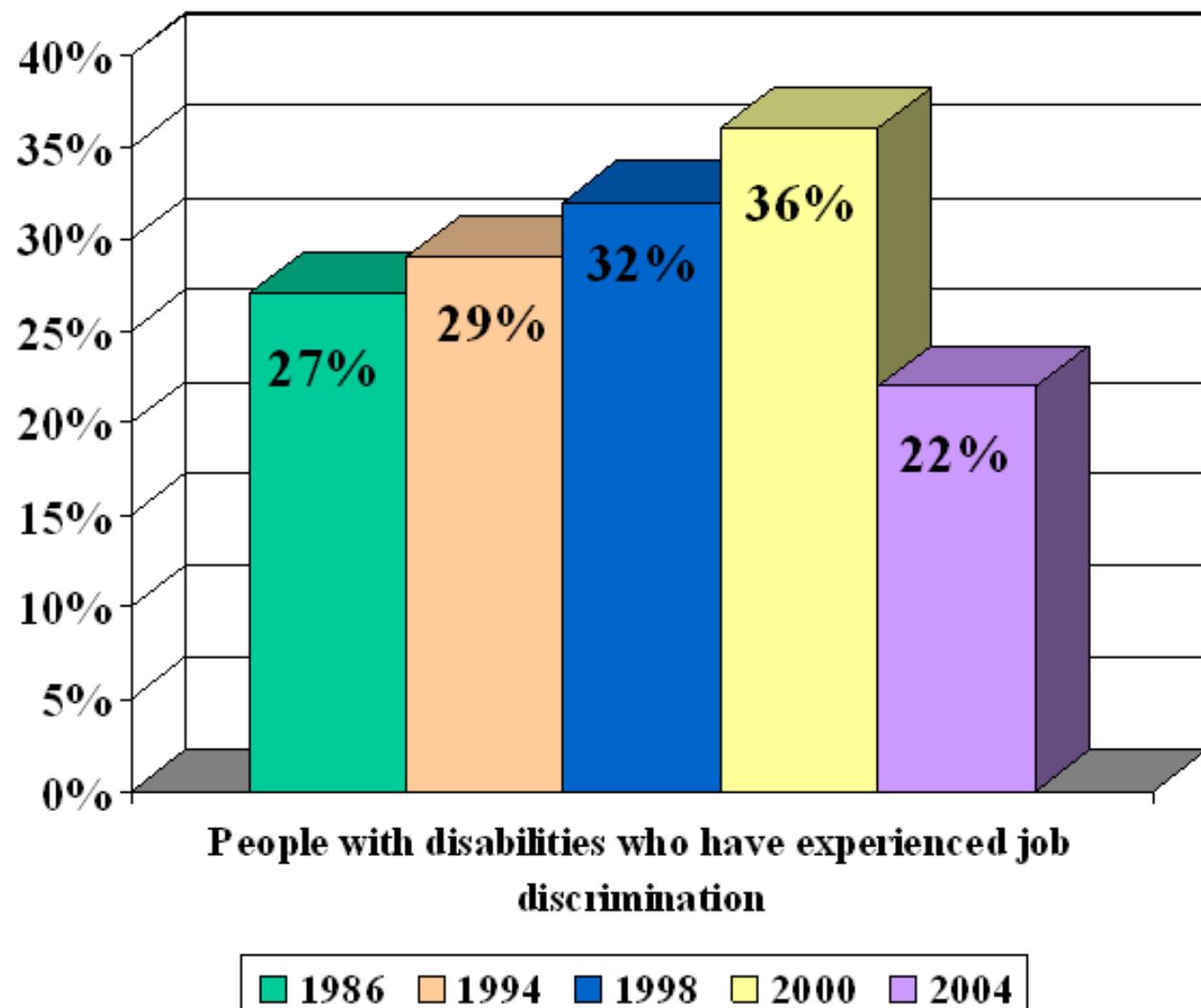
**Touch-screen Monitors
Screen Reading Software
Wrist and Arm Supports
Ergonomic Chairs
Back Supports
Assistive Keyboards
Assistive Mouse
Screen Magnifiers
Phone Headsets
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf
(TDD/TTY)**

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATIO N

Employment Discrimination

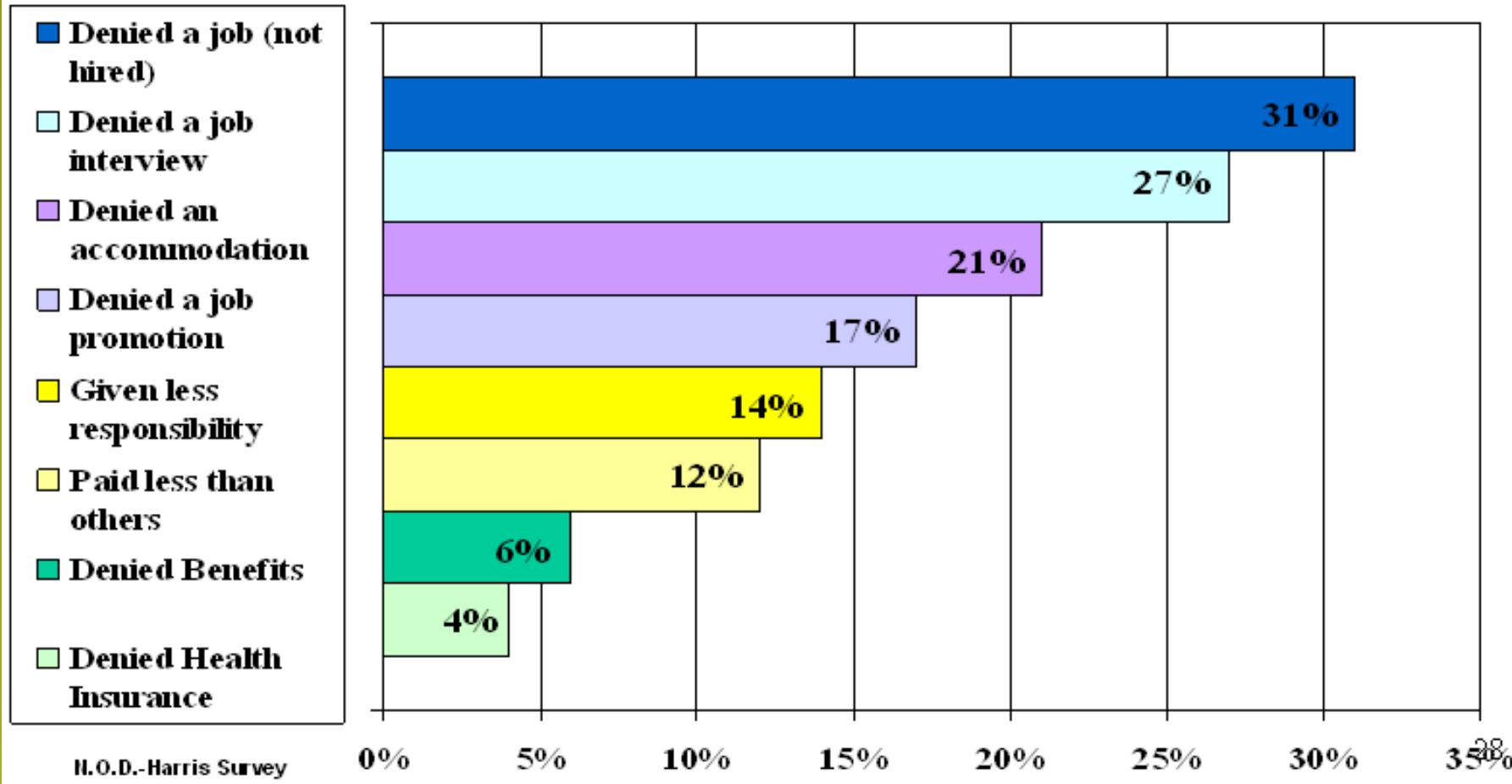
More than
1 in 5
people with
disabilities have
encountered job
discrimination.

The 22% reported
in 2004 marks a
decrease in job
discrimination
reported from
1986 through
2004.



Employment Discrimination

The survey divides discriminating treatment against people with disabilities into eight main types. In 2004, the largest percentage was people with disabilities who were refused a job.



Employment Discrimination

According to the N.O.D.-Harris, the only form of discrimination that was higher in the 2004 survey than previous years is people with disabilities being refused a job interview. Most categories are drastically lower compared to previous years.

Denied a Job

1998 – 58%
2000 -- 51%
2004 – 31%

Denied a Job Interview

1998 – 23%
2000 -- 22%
2004 – 27%



Denied a Promotion

1998 – 29%
2000 -- 28%
2004 – 17%

Paid Less Than Others

1998 – 34%
2000 -- 29%
2004 – 12%



Given Less Responsibility

1998 – 43%
2000 -- 32%
2004 – 14%

Denied an Accommodation

1998 – 22%
2000 -- 40%
2004 – 21%

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

Americans With Disabilities Act

Perhaps the most significant legislation in the past 20 years for people with disabilities is the Americans with Disabilities Act which was passed in 1990. The ADA is a federal civil rights law designed to prevent discrimination and enable individuals with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of society.

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.

**President George Bush Signing the
Americans With Disabilities Act,
July 26, 1990.**

Credit: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum



Americans With Disabilities Act

According to ADA, private and public employers must make sure that people with disabilities

- have an equal opportunity to apply for jobs and to work in jobs for which they are qualified;
- have an equal opportunity to be promoted once they are working;
- have equal access to benefits and privileges of employment that are offered to other employees; and
- are not harassed because of their disability.



Americans With Disabilities Act

The ADA applies to a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (like walking, standing, sleeping).

- ✓ The ADA covers more than just people who are deaf, people who are blind, and people who use wheelchairs.
- ✓ People who have physical conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, HIV infection, or severe forms of arthritis or hypertension may be individuals with disabilities.
- ✓ People with mental impairments such as major depression, bipolar disorder, and learning disabilities may also be covered.



OPPORTUNITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Opportunities in the 21st Century

The passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act was a large step in ensuring equal employment access for people with disabilities. Smaller steps continue each year to improve access, provide adequate transportation, and lower the rates of employment discrimination that people with disabilities face in the workforce.

For example, in September 2004, the U.S. Labor Secretary, Elaine L. Chao, awarded \$2.4 million in telework grants to people and veterans with disabilities.

These grants will help fund initiatives that will increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



Elaine L. Chao

THANK YOU!